



FEED THE FUTURE

The U.S. Government's Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative

Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/farm-or-not-farm-helping-youth-discover-opportunity-agriculture>

To Farm or Not to Farm? Helping Youth Discover Opportunity in Agriculture



Africa Lead II

On the set of the popular soap opera, Makutano Junction, the character Florence sizes up the maize “sheller machine” which is central to her agribusiness idea. Actress Janet Kirinya (center) plays the character of Florence.

It wasn't easy for Florence in the big city. Nairobi was a tough place for a young person to make it. Jobs weren't easy to find, opportunities were few, and her friends and family were far away.

Now that she's returned to her home in rural Kenya, Florence has new dreams. She develops plans for an agribusiness that could provide a promising future, but obstacles such as bank loans, broken friendships, and loan sharks stand in her way. Like millions of other people in East Africa, to find out what happens to Florence, you'll have to tune in to Citizen Television.

Florence is a character in one of East Africa's popular soap operas, but her storyline—of rural youth struggling to find opportunity—is real and all too common for many young people in Africa.

According to the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, “Over 40 percent of the total unemployed in Africa are youth; and 70 percent of them live in rural areas.” Addressing this challenge isn't easy, and there are lots of factors that need to come together for youth to find jobs in rural areas. However, Florence is emerging as a heroine and bringing the struggles and aspirations of rural youth to millions of people. Even more importantly, her story—and the multimedia programming delivered alongside it—are providing resources and ideas to youth watching the show all over the region.

The “edutainment” oriented storyline is a result of a new partnership between Feed the Future’s Africa Lead II program and Mediae, a production company that produces the television show “Makutano Junction” as well as “Shamba Shape Up,” another agriculture-focused show.

The new season of “Makutano Junction” started airing in January 2016 and broadcasts weekly across Kenya, Tanzania and into Uganda. The story plays out over eight episodes in this award-winning, youth-focused television drama and has an SMS-

driven audience response component to engage youth on agribusiness entrepreneurship. Designed to focus on three critical phases of nearly all small agribusinesses, the Florence storyline shows that small agribusiness development is a viable, attractive career option.

Aimed at taking the mystery out of starting a small business, it also helps young people realize that they already have many of the skills required of a small start-up. The show aims to help young people overcome emotional and social barriers to starting a business in agriculture. Additionally, the show addresses fears associated with first-time business start-ups, including fear of losing money, fear of looking bad, fear of change, and fear that one is not an entrepreneur.

Learning doesn't end after the 30 minutes of an episode. The show's media outreach and social media efforts, specifically an interactive SMS messaging campaign, work to arm potential youth agribusiness entrepreneurs with basic knowledge in the main areas of small agribusiness. The content for these focus areas involved technical input from Africa Lead and the Kenya Agricultural Value Chain Enterprises project, a United States Agency for International Development program that seeks to increase the productivity and incomes of smallholders and other actors along staple crops, dairy and horticulture value chains, thereby enhancing food security and improving nutrition.

While there's no spoiler here, Florence, in her quest to overcome various emotional, social and business challenges, confronts the same challenges encountered by young agribusiness entrepreneurs around the world. Will she choose the city over her rural community? Will she triumph over her challenges? Will she discover opportunities that she didn't know existed? Will she decide to farm or not to farm? As they say, that is the question.

You can follow Florence on "Makutano Junction" every Wednesday on Citizen TV, watch [previous episodes on YouTube](#), and track plot developments on [Makutano Junction's Facebook page](#).